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S E R M O N

PREACHED to a CONGREGATION of
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,
At CRUTCHED-FRIARS;

OCCASIONED

By the denial of Relief, respecting Subscription, to
the Articles of the Church of England.

By E. RADCLIFF.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR W. DOMVILLE, AT THE LAMB, UNDER
THE ROYAL-EXCHANGE, CORNHILL,

M,DCC,LXXII.

MEMORIAL

PRESENTED TO THE CONVENTION OF

PROTESTANT DISSIDENTS

AND OUTCASTS

OF THE CHURCH

By the General of Relief, respecting Subscriptions to
the Articles of the Church of England.

By E. R. CLIFFE



LONDON

PRINTED FOR W. BARNES, AT THE LANE, UNDER

THE GREAT EXCHANGE, CORNHILL.

1820.

TO HIS GRACE
THE
DUKE of RICHMOND.

MY LORD,

PERMIT me to request your Grace's acceptance of a discourse, which pretends to no other merit, but that of being dictated by a warm affection for truth, and a sincere desire to maintain the rights of genuine Christianity.

The honorable and distinguished part your Grace has taken in every constitutional debate, that has of late years been agitated in the british senate, left you no fame to acquire, but from an opportunity of shewing your zeal in favor of religious liberty, the last and

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dearest

ii DEDICATION.

dearest privilege of human nature. That occasion not long since presented itself, when a bill was brought into parliament to relieve dissenting ministers from the oppressive burthen of Subscription: and here, my Lord, you exerted yourself with spirit, eloquence, and judgment, worthy of the cause you espoused, and in a manner which must recommend you to the gratitude and esteem of every protestant dissenter.

Semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt.

This is not all.---Christianity ranks you among it's noble patrons, and that is a title more honorable than monarchs can bestow.

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DEDICATION. iii

Overcome at present by power and numbers, we believe that justice and reason will finally prevail. Our cause, though unsuccessful, shall remain, the cause of truth, while the records of the Gospel are kept pure and inviolate.

We asked nothing disproportioned to our allegiance; nothing inconsistent with civil policy, equity, or prudence; nothing that government need be ashamed, or sorry to bestow; nothing but a toleration of that faith which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone; that faith which has never ill requited her guardians.

If these pretensions fail, we must have recourse to the consolations
which

iv DEDICATION.

which sustained the first sufferers for the Christian cause, and never forsake virtuous intentions.

Next to the countenance of the God of Truth, we must fly to the approbation of men of wisdom and integrity; the name of Richmond mitigates disappointment, and gives dignity to defeat.

I had rather be the minister of the native religion of Christ, unbeneficed by temporal rewards, unprotected, except by talents and virtues like your Grace's, than be the first dignitary of any establishment under Heaven. Not that I am conscious of the least malevolence or rancor to the church of England, from which I differ upon conviction, and I trust with candor.

Her

DEDICATION. v

Her defects I lament, her excellencies I acknowledge ; but I hold in higher reverence an institution which has a prior and more noble establishment,---an establishment in truth, in benevolence, and in it's tendency to promote the happiness of mankind.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, noble efforts were made to break the chains of ecclesiastical bondage, and restore the christian church to its original purity and perfection ; those efforts were in part successful, but much remains still to be done ; Christianity was then stript of the outer robe of pomp and superstition, but the inner garment of artificial theology, was at that time left, and still remains an uncomely load upon her shoulders. This it is, that has for a long time conceal-
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vi DEDICATION.

ed her beauty, disfigured her divine image, reduced the number, and impaired the credit of her votaries. But we trust the day is coming (and may your Grace be instrumental in hastening its happy arrival,) when our holy religion, shall be relieved from this ignominious burden; when she shall be no longer impiously compelled to wear that party-livery, in which the vanity, the folly, and the wickedness of mankind have disguised her.

Such is her heavenly origin, such her innocence and purity, that like the fair form of virtue, and of truth, she will not only appear without a blush, but with superior dignity and grace, whenever, and wherever, she is permitted to come forth unveiled, and unadorned, save in her own native, but venerable garb, of genuine bene-

DEDICATION. vii

benevolence, and unaffected simplicity.

When noblemen of your Grace's high rank are not ashamed to vindicate Religion from all ecclesiastical usurpation, and to restore it to it's first principles, no adversaries can prevail against it ; it's success will be universal, and it's empire unbounded ; it stands in need of no other support, it wants no other alliance.

Proceed, my Lord, in the Path in which you have set out, emulate the characters of those illustrious princes who protected and encouraged the Protestant Reformers, and may it be your happiness to see compleatly perfected, that plan of truth and freedom which they happily began.

That

viii DEDICATION.

That your Grace's life may be long
preserved, for the honor of religion,
the defence of civil and religious li-
berty, and the good of your country,
is the ardent prayer of,

My Lord, Your Grace's,

most obedient,

and most devoted,

humble Servant,

E. RADCLIFFE.



Walthamstow,
June 15, 1772.

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S E R M O N.

THEN PETER AND THE OTHER APOSTLES
ANSWERED AND SAID, WE OUGHT TO
OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN.

ACTS V. xxix.

GOVERNMENT and laws are
necessary to the being of Society.
Without them mankind would degenerate
into savages, and a state of confusion and
hostility would universally prevail.

The weak would fall a prey to the strong,
and power and cunning would triumph over
justice and equity. But government intro-
duces order, security, and happiness, by
obliging every individual to submit to a sy-
stem of laws, agreed upon by the commu-
nity for the general good.

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A well regulated state knows no distinctions but those of virtue and merit, and affords one common protection to the highest and the lowest; making no other terms for the enjoyment of life, fortune, and liberty, but submission to the same equal and impartial laws.

Such an institution may be truly called "the ordinance of God," and he who endeavours to subvert it is a criminal of the highest rank, being intitled, not only to the punishment of the magistrate, but to the displeasure of that Being by whom kings reign and princes decree justice.

But it is natural to ask, whether man resigned his judgment and will universally when he entered into society? Are we bound to pay an implicit obedience to every thing that is imposed by the magistrate under the sanction of law? Do we give up our conscience and reason, and right of opposition in all cases, when we become subjects? God for-

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bid ! this would be making slavery and obedience synonymous terms. It destroys all the benefits of society, and confounds the subjection of brutes, with the free and generous compliance, of rational creatures.

Experience shews that government has often been abused : and if its authority was still the same, it would be man's duty to concur in his own misery and destruction, which is contrary to the first law of nature. It may be sometimes prudent to acquiesce in the greatest oppression, but never criminal to oppose it.

Wicked and ambitious rulers have often turned that power, with which they were entrusted for the happiness and benefit of the people, into their ruin ; and in that case, government, instead of being one of the greatest blessings of the Almighty, becomes one of the greatest calamities, and ought to be resisted by every man of honor, spirit, or benevolence.

Unjust government is only iniquity established by law, and appears horrible in proportion

portion to the difficulty of destroying it. Dominion over man's liberty and religion may be usurped, but cannot be vindicated. They are natural privileges, for the loss of which we can receive no equivalent. I shall confine myself at present to religion.

The relation in which we stand to God, as our Creator, Preserver, and Judge, is prior to all civil contracts, and would remain unalterably sacred if there was no such thing as a community upon earth. A legal connection with men, yields many secular advantages; but an intercourse with God, maintained by a submission to his will, promises endless felicity: and therefore it can never be supposed, that the obligations we enter into with mankind, for self preservation and mutual convenience, can ever abrogate or supersede the covenant we are under to the supreme Governor of nature, as rational and accountable creatures, any more than the customs and regulations of a city or town can

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contradict or set aside the superior laws of the realm.

The tribute of worship and praise cannot be alienated from the living God, as He is the fountain of all mercy. The principles of conscience cannot be invaded, because it is the test and guide of our moral conduct. The exercise of those sentiments of faith which concern our happiness in a future state, cannot be given up, without renouncing our allegiance to the great Judge of our spirits. These duties arise from the constitution of our nature, and as they exist, independant of all the institutions of civil authority, are of immutable and indispensible obligation.

If every law was obligatory because it passed through the usual forms, and had the sanction of the reigning powers, all the bloody edicts issued by the Roman emperors, in the madness of their pride and cruelty, were just and sacred, and the disobedience of the first Christians was sedition and rebellion.

The

The noble resolution of the Jews not to sacrifice to idols; the intrepid refusal of the three children of Israel to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image; the unconquerable determination of the apostles to preach Christ crucified; the manly efforts of the reformers which threw off the yoke of popery; the struggles of our ancestors for civil and religious liberty, which ended at last in the revolution, were all wicked and inexcusable; and the authors of them deserve to be branded as incendiaries and traitors. But that sense of rectitude which is implanted in the human breast reverses the decrees of tyranny, and pronounces such an opposition honorable and glorious. The impartial testimony of applause which has always been paid to such men as martyrs and heroes; and the detestation which has invariably pursued hypocrisy and cowardice, are an evident proof that we ought to obey God rather than man.

If it should be asked, why we ought to obey God rather than man, I answer, because
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his power is not only greater, but his laws more excellent; because they are inspired by infinite wisdom and founded in the nature of things. Being governed by no passion or caprice, by no prejudice or resentment; whatever He dictates to his creature, either by reason or revelation, must redound to their present and eternal happiness, and therefore demands unlimited submission.

Man's power extends only to the grave; God's jurisdiction remains to all eternity, through an unbounded range of being, in which He can, if He pleases, reward or punish us.

If it should be asked, how we shall know the will of God? I answer, we might as well ask, how do we know that we live? we need only consult our consciences and open our bibles, to learn the voice of heaven; and there are some things, which I am as fully persuaded to be the dictates of a wise and merciful God, as if I had the declaration of an angel to confirm them. To comply
with

with the sentiments of my conscience, to do unto all men as I would have them do unto me, to cultivate universal benevolence and friendship towards all that bear the image of my Maker, must be eternally right; and I would sooner believe that the world was made by chance, than that such actions would want the countenance or favor of the Lord God Omnipotent.

This was the manner in which the apostles argued, and they were neither madmen, nor bigots, nor enthusiasts, as a profligate age would represent them.

They recommended, both by their preaching and practice, an obedience to the laws; they patiently bore the greatest civil oppression, and recommended it to their followers to lead peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty; they disarmed the rage of their enemies by meekness, and took away all pretences of treating them as state offenders by resignation to the greatest wrongs; yet when they were commanded not to preach Jesus Christ,

Christ, they firmly resisted, and with composed courage replied, " we ought to obey " God rather than men." Disobedience to all human decrees, when interfering with the rights of conscience, could not be avowed in more manly and spirited terms; and agreeable to these principles, which were to be a rule to christians in all succeeding ages, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer for the name of Christ, and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to preach Jesus Christ. They knew that the religion they taught was of divine authority, that its laws were calculated to make men wise and good, and that eternal happiness was the certain reward of a faithful profession of it. Temporal sufferings were not to be put in the scale against such important advantages: they held the trust with which they were commissioned of too sacred a nature to be dispensed with, whether they were countenanced or discouraged, it

was all the same; their purpose was fixed, and their virtue inflexible; neither promises allured, nor terrors intimidated them, from declaring that Him, whom the Jews had hanged upon a tree, God had exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins: and such was the signal success attending their honest zeal, that in spite of the fury of priests and rulers, their doctrines spread, their converts increased, and their religion subdued the world unto itself.

I am now to apply the answer of the apostles to an event, which, for the honor of our country, I wish to be buried in everlasting oblivion; I am sorry there should be any occasion, in this enlightened age, and at a period so distant from the reformation, to complain of any encroachment upon the sacred ground of religion, or to distinguish between the laws of men and the laws of heaven; happy for that nation where they never clash, but harmoniously conspire to promote

promote man's present and eternal happiness.

When this country was emerging from the dark cloud of popery, it was universally contended, that the bible was the only religion of Protestants; the bible, the great charter of the living God, which contained the words of eternal life; that every diminution from, or addition to it, was impious, and that nothing could be bound upon the faith or practice of Christians, inconsistent with or against it, by any human decrees; the monstrous pretences of the church of Rome to enslave the consciences of men to its own infallible explications, were justly disputed; and Christ was admitted to be the supreme arbiter and Master of His own religion: but now since the church of England has acquired an establishment, independant of truth, and superior to all danger, the immortal principles upon which it arose are forgotten, and it has imbibed the intolerant spirit of its imperious rival.

We are told, there is no name given under heaven by which we can be saved, and yet, as a proof how little human establishment partakes of the genius and spirit of that gospel, from which they pretend to draw their origin, there is hardly any other name, under which men have been more effectually ruined in the present world, than this.

I appeal to the sense, justice, and equity of all mankind, whether making that necessary to salvation which Christ has not required, and so leaving one set of Christians to prescribe rules of faith to another, and enforce them according to their power, is not of the very essence of persecution? and whether this is not the chief lineament in the features of that church which has filled the world with cruelty and blood? If we once doubt of the perfection of scripture, and allow any thing to be of equal authority, we may go on framing new systems of faith, and adding one corruption and iniquity to another, till we arrive at the tortures of the
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inquisition. It must either imply, that Christ did not understand his own religion, or that his Apostles did not sufficiently explain it; or else, that it is defective in providing for the welfare of society, and that its natural tendency, is to make men unfit for government.

How comes it to pass, that a multitude of articles, some of them unintelligible, others inconsistent with scripture and reason, shall be enforced as necessary to the welfare of society, and terms of christian communion?

Is it the best qualification to preach the gospel, to believe that, which is incompatible with it?

How was it that Christians became possessed of a power of claiming subscriptions, which neither Christ nor his Apostles either exercised or assumed? The case, alas! is too clear; human inventions first devise a system of religion, and then human laws establish it. If I reason wrong, or draw unfair inferences, I should be glad to be convinced of my mistake.

By

By a Christian, I mean one, who believes in Christ, and embraces his religion as the rule of his faith and practice, and the foundation of his immortal happiness; by a Christian Minister, I mean one, who faithfully inculcates such doctrines as he conscientiously believes to be contained in the Gospel.

Yet such a one, to the shame of a country which calls itself protestant, is not even tolerated; he is liable to fines and imprisonment; he is ranked among the greatest criminals, and threatened, at least, as if he trampled upon the fundamental rights of society; he pleads the hardship of his lot, the sincerity of his heart, the loyalty of his conduct; he gains no redress; he lies at the mercy of informers, whose interest it is to ruin him. Good God, where is the humanity of Englishmen, or the benevolence of Christians!

But are our principles, or conduct to be altered by our fate, God forbid! I declare to you, without fear or reserve, if it was necessary for Christian Ministers to believe that
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the bulk of the human race were doomed from all eternity, to inevitable damnation ; that infants, in consequence of original sin, were under the curse of God, and that man could do nothing towards his Salvation, being laid under a necessity of sinning, which he could not prevent ; I should wish there was not a Christian Minister in the world.

If to believe that the supreme judge of the earth punishes without guilt, rewards without virtue, and is governed by arbitrary caprice, be a preparation for preaching the gospel of truth ; then fraud, injustice, and perfidy are the best characteristics of social creatures. If there are any doctrines that ought not to be tolerated, they are such as these, which undermine the blessed character of the Deity ; which strike at the root of all morality and religion ; which counteract the force of the best laws, and make men uncharitable, malevolent, and persecuting, in order more effectually to recommend them to the approbation of

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Heaven. If I believe them, I am my own enemy. If I propagate them, I am the enemy of all mankind : how such doctrines came to be dignified by the name of the Gospel, is to me one of the most inexplicable mysteries in the history of human nature. Our ancestors gave a proof of their candor and moderation, by being satisfied with an exemption from the rites and ceremonies of the church ; they agreed with it in doctrine, and concurred in sentiment, and did not scruple to lie under the same obligation to maintain them.

Advancing knowledge and free enquiry has produced a revolution of principles, and laid the foundation of a more liberal and generous dissent in matters of faith and doctrine. And will any man say, we have exceeded the bounds of christian liberty, or defeated the spirit of that law, by which toleration was first granted ? we claim no greater favor, we solicit no higher privilege, than we believe, would have been then complied with, had it been asked, no more, than many of our brethren

thren in other parts of these kingdoms happily enjoy, without any injury to the purity of religion, the safety of the establishment, or the peace of the state.

The long time, during which penal laws lay in silence, afforded a just presumption that the generosity of the age, and more elevated sentiments of christianity had utterly cancelled them; and when the Commons of England, after solemn debate, had almost unanimously pronounced them too cruel for execution, we thought we had reason to congratulate ourselves, upon the reconciliation of civil policy with the rights of private judgment, and the redemption of Christ's religion, from those fetters with which it has been bound upwards of a thousand years.

But when the most venerable and august assembly in the nation hath refused to deliver us from oppression, we must be alarmed for ourselves, and tremble for posterity.

Though we had a claim to every reasonable indulgence from our attachment to the

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state, and more especially from our affection to the family which now fills the throne, (which Almighty God preserve through all generations ;) yet we were content with a bare connivance, trusting only to the innocence of our designs for our security : but when the ministers of the established church petitioned to be relieved from subscription to human articles, as a yoke unchristian and intolerable, the Dissenters could not in justice to their principles remain silent, or forbear requesting a legal release from the bonds of communion, with which they had no connection, and from which they received no emoluments. The permission of their worship, they hoped, implied an allowance of their opinions. On this presumption they humbly addressed themselves to the legislature, and the event of their application you are all acquainted with ; but what will be its future consequences, is known only to Him, who is wonderful in council, and excellent in working. It would be flattering

ourselves to suppose the resolution of a senate of nobles should stand single, and unsupported.

That the laws should receive a fresh confirmation, only to be neglected and laid aside, would be a reflexion on the prudence and wisdom of government. We are authorized to conclude, that every conformable effort will be exerted to add dignity to this determination, and to suppress those ministers who do not comply with the express letter of their warrant; and if that be done, I believe our principles are not so far forgot, nor the spirit of our ancestors so nearly extinguished, but we shall adopt the language of the Apostles, we ought to obey God, &c.

In that case, our temples will be as effectually shut, as they were under the tyranny of the Stuarts; and our only consolation will be to reflect, that whatever we may suffer, we shall be vindicated by the united suffrages of the wisest, and the worthiest of human kind.

We had better renounce all the pleasures of social worship, and keep our religion in the recesses of our own bosoms, than acknowledge human explications of religion to be of equal force with the word of God, and give up the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

If the state imposes silence, I must obey, but my last words shall be a protest, against so impious, and arbitrary a decree ; and I will be bold to say, that the equitable claim of the Dissenters to religious liberty, after the many unparalleled proofs they have given of their allegiance and loyalty, would not have been rejected in any kingdom upon earth, *Great-Britain* only excepted.

I am perfectly convinced there would be more justice in confiscating all our possessions.

If our understanding, our belief, our judgment are forfeited to the state, what can we call our own ? We can only say, “ would to God we had any thing more to lose.”

The Dissenters are neither formidable for their power, nor their numbers ; but they have that, which neither power nor numbers can subdue ; ambitious only of enjoying their religion in peace, they neither affect persecution nor shun it ; divided in their opinions about civil and speculative questions, they have but one sentiment about the rights of private judgment ; and if this be invaded, let it be remembered, that distress gives vigor and union, and this country must have profited little by experience, to hope to crush a people animated by one common cause, and united by one common sense of oppression. Let *France, Spain and Italy*, and all the world boast of the converts they have made by the sword, I hope this kingdom will never engage in establishing an absolute monarchy of faith.

Over such conquests humanity weeps, and religion is wounded in the house of her friend. I hope that period is not far remote, when mankind shall blush at the annals of martyrdom,

dom, and be impatient to wipe away the memory of every attempt to subdue the freedom, the fortitude, and independency of the mind.

While I am conscious of no factious or sinister views, I will commend myself to the God of truth, and hope for the approbation of every man who has understanding to judge, and a heart to feel for the rights of humanity. My property and substance I can spare, my life I can resign, but my interest in a future state, secured by the revelation of the gospel, I will never dispose of ; my confidence in the friendship of the great author of nature, thro' the assurance of integrity, is too valuable for monarchs to command, or worlds to purchase.

Shall truth and reason, and a cause which stood the persecution of imperial Rome, be overcome by pains and penalties? vain and impotent menaces ! they must pursue us into futurity, and inflict something worse than the loss of liberty and life, before the principles of protestantism can be extirpated. They who fear God can fear nothing besides.

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The reason he has given, we will honestly exercise; the gospel he has revealed, we will faithfully consult and follow; content with its doctrines, unexplained, unamended, and I trust, we shall need no other guide.

That we can sleep in security, and enjoy our property unmolested, are blessings, for which I hope we shall always be thankful, and make all the returns of obedience and duty; but, is this all that constitutes the happiness of a rational and intelligent creature? What is human life without enjoying and imparting our religious sentiments?*

If it should be urged, that the penalties to which we are liable are suspended, and the laws

* As to my lords the bishops, I say, that it is hard for them to avoid the blame, in the opinion of an indifferent judge, for standing so precisely upon altering nothing: laws unrefreshed with new ones, grow sour; and without changing what is bad, the good cannot be continued. — To take away many abuses supplants not good orders; but establishes them. A contentious retaining of custom is as turbulent a thing, as innovation. A good husbandman is ever pruning his vineyard, or his field; not unseasonably indeed, nor unskilfully, but lightly; he ever finds somewhat to do. We hear of no offers made by the bishops of bills in parliament, which no doubt, proceeding from them to whom it properly belongs, would have every where met with acceptance. — Their own constitutions and orders have reformed them little.

L. Bacon.

laws which enforce them inactive, why are they suffered to remain, except as a monument of bigotry and ignorance, to shew that our extensive charity has not yet reached to religion? why must we thro' fear of them be all our lives subject to bondage? why are we mocked with a toleration without freedom, and an indulgence without safety.

A standing army of penal laws, kept up in the absence of every real danger, is no mark of amity and good will.

Our toleration only excuses us from complying with the established worship. It dispenses with our not kneeling at the altar, bowing to the east, crossing in baptism, and a few other ceremonies, so trifling and indifferent, that if they were the only foundation of our dissent, I should think our separation was the effect of a weak scrupulosity, more to be pitied than applauded.

If religious liberty means any thing, it means a privilege of interpreting the scriptures for ourselves; and if the state under
which

which my lot is cast, will not permit me to profess sentiments on which I believe my immortal happiness depends, I am invaded in my dearest rights, and suffer an irretrievable injury.

God forbid any thing should *be justly laid* our charge, as members of society, subjects and neighbours, because we have no right to commit any act of injustice upon our fellow creatures; but our thoughts are peculiarly our own, and can wrong none but ourselves. If they are false, we must abide the consequence, and take up with the same; on the other hand, if abandoning our own judgment, we embrace implicitly the dictates of the magistrate; we must vary with the country in which we dwell, and the power that happens accidentally to be supreme. It shall always be fluctuating and uncertain; Calvinists to-day, Arminians to-morrow, and know not what the next. Besides, if we should be in the wrong, how shall we answer it to Almighty God, that we have not

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exercised

exercised the faculties he gave us? Or Jesus Christ, for not asserting those rights he established with his blood?

It will be no justification of error, that we were *commanded* to embrace it, unless the authority to which we submitted was competent and lawful.

If I am mistaken after an honest pursuit of truth, my sincerity will mitigate my fault.

But if from sloth or cowardice, or political motives, I fall into delusion, will the faith of man be imputed to me for righteousness? What vindication can I make? What security have I, that I shall not be condemned at the last day? Can a man plead an act of parliament at the tribunal of Almighty God? I fear not.

You see then the absurdity of resting upon human authority in matters of faith, where our salvation is concerned; for he cannot indemnify absolutely and finally, have no right to impose: to sacrifice consciences at the altar of religion,

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turn her throne, whilst we are pretending to establish her dominion.

There is no more harm in a difference of opinions in religion, than in learning and philosophy.† It is the necessary result of reason and free enquiry; and I know of no benefit we should get by that great object of political religion, Uniformity of Doctrines, except it be the loss of an opportunity of shewing our moderation and charity. The only way to accomplish universal agreement in opinion, would be to suppress all the means of knowledge, to shut up the book of life, and let ignorance be the mother of devotion. We should then have but one faith, or more properly speaking, we should have no faith at all, but be fit for every thing that ambitious rulers and priests would wish.

In these liberal days of science and humanity, when all religions and nations find an

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† A noble author says, — If magistracy should vouchsafe to interpose in the sciences, as it does in religion, 'tis very probable we should have as bad logick, as bad mathematicks, and in every kind as bad philosophy, as we often have divinity, where precise orthodoxy is settled by law.

asylum among us, (and what cause have we
 to repent of our tenderness?) when infidels,
 (to the honor of our religion) have no ad-
 versaries but reason and argument; when
 papists are treated with a greater clemency
 than for a century past; it is a matter of just
 complaint, that protestant ministers, who can
 be charged with no crime against the state,
 should be exempted from that protection,
 which virtue and innocence afford in all wise
 governments, and left to the mercy of laws,
 which the wickedest member of society may
 put in execution. What shall we say of a
 country where honesty is dangerous, and pre-
 varication secure? To think that a body of
 men, whose profession depends upon prin-
 ciple, and who would not have existed but
 for their integrity, should have nothing to
 trust to but the accidental candor of a parti-
 cular period; should only be safe by being
 unknown;---that a profession, which has no
 other object but to preserve Christianity pure
 and inviolate, and promote the virtue and
 happiness

happinefs of fociety, fhould only be fuffered by a connivance, which implies guilt, and carries with it reproach ;---that the worship of that Being before whom all the princes of the earth are duft and afhes, fhould be limited and reftained, modified and controlled, according to the maxims of worldly policy ; and that nothing elfe fhould be tolerated, but upon the hardeft terms, upon terms which render liberty void, and which cannot be accepted without bidding farewel to reafon and revelati-on ! Thefe are indignities which nothing could fustain but the firm perfuafion of a righteous Providence, and a future retribution. That confcience which dictates our sentiments, can fupport us in maintaining them. As men we may complain, as Chriftians we muft be faithful unto death. There is but one part for us to act. It is better to obey God, than man ; we muft plead our obligations to the fovereign Lord of Nature, his laws cannot be broken with impunity, his will is eternally juft, his authority cannot be fuperseded, his
domi-

dominion extends beyond the grave, where the vindictive arm of human power is never felt, and where liberty is compleat. Who would sacrifice his allegiance to such a Being for any thing that men can threaten, or the world bestow? We may defy all human terror under this persuasion, that whatever we suffer from a sense of religion and motives of conscience, will be abundantly compensated, either in this life, or that which is to come.

To conclude, as our persons and properties are under the controul of the state, our minds and consciences are the peculiar right and claim of the great author of our faith; and we cannot discharge the duties of good subjects and good Christians, unless we render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's.

F I N I S